

# Re-creating the Brits' Mosquito protectorate

The Mosquito Indians, today called "Miskitos," are a British fabrication. In the 1600s, British pirates gave that name to the people living along the Caribbean coast of what are today Honduras and Nicaragua, who were mixed descendants of these pirates, black slaves from British woodcutting gangs, and the area's semi-nomadic Indian inhabitants. Supplied with arms by the British, the Mosquitos became the dominant group in the region, capturing and selling members of other tribes as slaves to British pirates. Since the 1600s, the primary economic activity of the Mosquitos has been contraband.

The British Crown first established its "Mosquito Kingdom" in 1687, transporting Chief Oldman of the Mosquitos to Britain to be "crowned." Successor kings were often crowned in, and occasionally based out of, British Honduras, today Belize. British presence increased during the 1739-48 British-Spanish War, when Capt. Robert Hodgson organized a Mosquito rebellion against local Spanish authorities, hoisted the British flag, and brought in British troops.

The Crown's interests grew again in the 1800s, with Jeremy Bentham's 1822 "Junctiana" proposal for the construction of an interoceanic canal through Lake Nicaragua, and for the founding of an expanded "Anglo-American United States" in Central America. During this period, His Britannic Majesty's representative to the Mosquitos collected customs on all trade in the area. In 1848, the Crown representative renamed the protectorate "Mosquitia," hoisted the "Mosquito" flag (modeled on the Union Jack) over the Nicaraguan port of San Juan, well south of any area inhabited by the Mosquitos, and renamed it Greytown after the governor of Britain's Jamaican slave colony. By 1850, the Mosquito shore had encroached upon a large land area (see **Map 1**). The Crown did not relinquish its claims over the Mosquitos until 1894 (see **Map 2**).

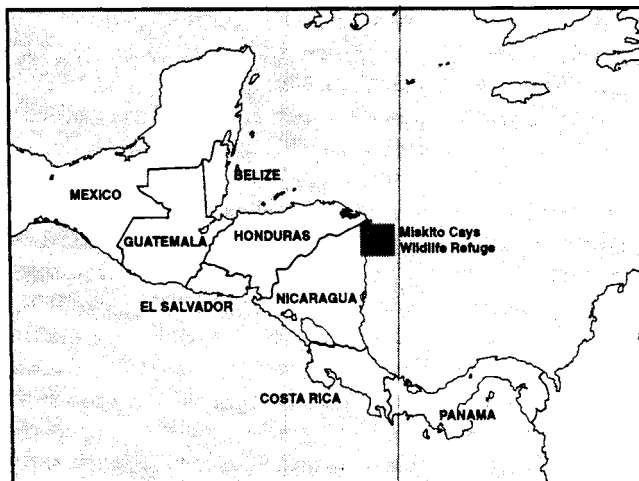
The British Crown now proposes to have the *future* map of the area return to that of the 1850s, by reestablishing their old Mosquito protectorate under a "green" flag. The process began with the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. In the 1980s, anthropologists from Cultural Survival worked through both the Sandinista government and the Contra opposition to organize for Mosquito autonomy. Access to Contra Mosquito refugee camps in Honduras in the mid-1980s was controlled by Diana Villiers-Negroponte, a Scottish aristocrat whose husband was the U.S. ambassador to Honduras. The Mosquito leaders in the autonomy project have names such as Steadman Fagoth and Armstrong Wiggins.

In 1991, the Mosquito Cays Wildlife Reserve was established. And in 1992, Cultural Survival and the U.S. National Geographic Society mapping project proposed an expanded Mosquito area, as reflected in **Map 3**.

MAP 1  
Central America, 1850



MAP 2  
Central America, 1994



MAP 3  
Central America, 2000

